

Infinity Mirror

by Harrison V. Perry

‘*Zap gun,*’ Damu said, a cigarette burning between his thick lips. ‘Ain’t nothing finer, ain’t nothing sweeter.’

Mayli shook her head, eyeing the silver-blue-iridescent *DeeTon Gammer*—new in this month. ‘Just call it what it is.’

‘I won’t give the gun the dishonour. *DeeTon* *might* be racists, but they do make good guns...’

‘I don’t like it either, but I don’t like yours any better. Actually...—’ she paused, thought—‘Yeah, yours is definitely worse.’

‘Yuah?’

‘Mhm.’

‘Officers!’ yelled Captain Wataru, entering the address-room and taking his place behind the lecturn. The room went dead.

Damu stuffed his *zap gun* in its holster, crushed out his cigarette on the desk, pocketed the end like a crazy man. Mayli spat her gum into the nearest atom-cycler bucket and gave a polite nod to her captain. They had been out drinking last night and she was pleased to see he didn’t look too bad.

‘Ladies, gentlemen, everything in between,’ Captain Wataru began, ‘we’ve got a rogue AI on our hands.’

Mayli shuffled upright, the hardwood chair *hard*.

‘It’s been loose on the net for about five hours now. Broke out of a Chinese University Super GPUter.’

Damu’s face appeared in Mayli’s periphery, whispered, ‘A *what?*’ His breath smelt of stale spit and tobacco.

‘GPUs, not CPUs,’ Mayli whispered back. She’d keep trying to explain the difference to him until he either got it, or blasted her with his fucking *zap gun*.

‘It’s called the *Infinity Mirror,*’ the Captain said.

Damu whistled.

‘Quiet,’ snapped the Captain, who scowled for a moment—Mayli thinking he was about to shoot lasers out his head—but instead he turned to the board behind him. He waved his hand about. Nothing happened. Shitty New York State police budgets ... can never afford the working IT equipment.

Mayli was about to get up to help when the board flickered to life.

‘Alright,’ Captain Wataru said, the glow from the (shitty) board on his face. ‘This is a network-graph that shows where the AI has been and where the logicians in China think it’s going. It’s imperative we don’t let it hit all of Wikipedia’s servers—the State’s got a large server-farm upstate in Ogdensburg. Our job is to protect them from both the AI and a physical, human terror-cell.’ The Captain flicked the air and the slides on the board changed. A big character appeared—one Mayli hadn’t seen in *many* years.

The captain went on, ‘This character—for whatever reason—is being replaced by the *Infinity Mirror* on all the world’s servers—*Infinity Mirror* is currently fighting an AI battle—’ Mayli smirked at this, the lack of technical terms in the Captain’s lexicon was amusing—‘with Jimmy Wales’ personal AI. A Turkish terror cell tried to destroy Jimmy Wales’ AI’s server farm with a matter-inverter bomb, to take it offline, but San Francisco Police stopped them.’ The captain looked down and shook his head. ‘They lost three officers.’

‘What’s it mean?’ Damu whispered—seizing the moment and getting right in Mayli’s face; his breath smelt like sour eggs now.

‘Nothing.’ Mayli whispered back. ‘Shut up. Pay attention. Brush your teeth for *Christ’s sake*.’

‘Yeah yeah, come on, I know it’s all sacred and shit—I know that’s *Zen*, but *come on*, you can tell me, Misses my mummy was a monk...’

‘No, you moron; it means *nothing*.’

‘Oh, right, yeah, I was, err, testing you.’ He leant back. Good to have his breath out her face.

Testing you, she thought to herself, *Christ... boys only give a shit about guns, girls, cigarettes, and being right all the fucking time; I swear to god.*

The Captain gave Mayli a scowl—*FOR WHAT!?*—and waved at the board. The slide rolled over and was instantly replaced with Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorems (another thing she’d not seen in a while...) She was starting to think the Universe was out to get her ... again.

Mayli stole a glance at Damu: his eyes were narrowed; his mouth was agape; he was *actually* reading. She turned back to the board:

“Any consistent formal system F within which a certain amount of elementary arithmetic can be carried out is incomplete; i.e., there are statements of the language of F which can neither be proved nor disproved in F .”

She’d not study-*studied* Gödel in a long time. Her logic days were long gone. She was a NY State Officer now *and a damn good one at that*, she added to herself. But the elusive tug—the *mhhmm*, she thought, *what was it? The call to a higher power?* Maybe it was something like that, she wasn’t sure what, but it sure *felt* like an elusive tug: ‘Go back,’ the tug said to her, ‘get out of this game and go back to the PhD—’

‘Guanyin!’ snapped the Captain.

Mayli jumped out from her thoughts at the sound of her surname. Damu laughed. At which the Captain shouted, ‘John-Drummer! I’ll come over there and whip that shit-eating grin off your face. Attention!’

The collective inhale of the smallish address-room nearly sucked all the oxygen from the air. *Nearly*, Mayli said to herself. ‘Yes, Captain, sorry.’

‘You and the *zap gun* are taking point on this, alright? I need you two upstate at Wikipedia’s New York farm.’ He waved his hands and the board behind rolled over to the next slide. ‘We’ve got the area covered by the IR satellite, so anything that approaches we’ll see.’

‘Assuming,’ Mayli said, ‘they don’t know how to cloak their heat signatures.’

Captain Wataru adjusted his cap. She could read his thoughts through his eyes: *They can do that?* All he said was, ‘Yes, let’s hope not. Dismissed.’

Rain, falling in drops, made it hard for her to get the Zippo to light. Damu chewed the last of his hotdog, walked beside her—no shits given to the rain.

‘Finally,’ Mayli said, the flame bright and orange and burning the hemp paper of her roll-up. She snapped shut the Zippo, inhaled. Rush rushed through her blood—what was the rush? *She* knew it as relief—freedom from thought; the world knew it as genetically altered nicotine, whichever, it was good.

‘Shuttle bus or squad car?’ Damu asked. ‘Not sure I wanna drive.’

They had walked from the Station House, passing the myriad skyscrapers, skyfloaters, sky-x-y-zeds, and Mayli couldn’t quite wait to get out the city. Freedom from noise *and* signal. Maybe her mother would be able to reach out to her from the Ether. She shook her head, maybe not.

‘Huh? You wanna tell me now.’ He held out his phone. ‘I’ll book shuttle tickets, we can make it up to the server-farm in two hours.’

‘Sure,’ she said, drawing on the cigarette and walking around a broken pavement tile, unconscious of her own legs.

‘You is rattled.’ Damu tapped at his phone.

‘Got your badge, gun, and lenses? Don’t forget your head.’

‘*Christ*,’ he went, ‘tell me something—was you born with that stick up your ass or did someone put it there?’

‘Ha ha,’ *she* went, ‘you sure know how to sweet talk the ladies.’

A couple sodden footsteps, then, ‘Yauh, I’ve got the lot,’ he said, ‘thanks for asking...’

‘Good.’

‘Fuck you, Guanyin.’

Mayli smiled. ‘Fuck you too, John-Drummer.’

景

The shuttle took them upstate. No funny business along the way. Damu liked to point mental fingers at suspicious looking people—about as discriminatory as the *DeeTon* gunsmiths and sellers, of course the irony was lost on him; Mayli knew better—most of the time. She’d spent the journey trying to not think about Zen and Gödel—failing, and then having to plug herself into the shuttle’s Ether link. Drained down the case notes; watched an old film called *Matilda*; found out it was based on a novel by Roald Dahl; went deeper and found out that he came up through World War Two. Closed her link to the Ether and cried in the shuttle’s toilets for two minutes—Damu didn’t say anything, eyes closed earbuds in the whole journey.

Presently, they found themselves outside the server farm (a massive warehouse in the middle of an even bigger field of grass, amongst other plants Mayli didn’t know). Damu was laying it thick on the security officer in the security hut, whose computer failed to read their badge numbers.

‘I don’t follow,’ Damu said, his hand twitching beside the gun holster, his badge dangling from his neck on a *gold plated chain*. *Christ*, Mayli said to herself, *Image Image Image*.

‘Is been told *not* to let a single soul in.’ The security officer was tall—had to crouch in his hut when he stood—and had a mustache that looked a lot like broom-head bristles.

Mayli pulled out her phone and dialled for the Captain. **PARENTAL GUIDANCE!**

‘By who?’ Damu said, hands twitching.

‘I think you mean by *whom*.’

‘You wanna try that again?’ Damu slapped his hands on the window ledge. Left them there. ‘I ain’t here to make friends. I’m here to do my job. You wanna get in my way, *fine*, but that don’t mean I won’t get you outta my way.’

‘Man, shut the fuck up.’

‘Hello?’ Mayli said into the phone, turned away from the scene. ‘Yeah— No, we can’t get through security, bad read on our badges.’

The Captain’s voice was muffled over the phone. *What’s he saying?* she asked herself.

‘Fuck you!’ Damu yelled.

‘Hey man! Get your fucking hands off me,’ the security officer was yelling. ‘You know how long it takes to get this shit ironed good!?’

Mayli stole a look: Damu, hands *through* the officer hut window and around the security officer. She made to walk over, kick Damu in the shin, but Captain Wataru’s voice came through clear:

‘Updated security clearances are still processing— IT have no idea why it’s taking so long.’

‘*Christ,*’ Mayli said. ‘The world is filled with shitty software.’

‘You’ll have to talk your way in,’ the Captain said over the phone.

‘*Talk?*’ Mayli said. *Not a lot of talking going on.* She hunched herself, cupped the phone. ‘Damu’s not—’

‘You two need to figure—’

‘Mother fucker!’ screamed the security officer.

‘—out whatever it is you’re going through, understood? I’m not your mother and father. I’m your Captain.’ He hung up.

Mayli pocketed the phone, turned: Damu, sitting on top of the security officer—no, Damu *wrapping* the security officer up like headphone wire. *Fuck.*

Mayli charged over. ‘Get off him.’

‘He’s giving me shit; I give it back.’

‘Get *off* him.’

Both of them on the ground, the security officer’s face in Damu’s hip—right next to his *zap gun*.

‘Hey man,’ the security officer said, ‘is that a *DeeTon?*’

‘Let him go,’ she said, then, to herself: *Mayli! In through the nose and out through the mouth.*

‘Cause I get it, man.’

‘It is what it is!’ Damu, pulling hard on the security officer’s elbow, yelled.

‘Please!’ Mayli went. ‘We have *jobs* to do.’

‘They make good shooters, sure,’ the security officer said. ‘But you tryin to make it harder for all of us? I mean I *get it*, I do, but—*argh!*—b-but—’

‘Man, shut the fuck up!’

‘Let him go!’

‘B-but, it’s a good gun ‘n’ all, but *sheesh* man, you gotta help to get help, you hear me?’

Mayli went, ‘Right, that’s it.’ She drew *her* pistol, whacked Damu on the knee. He cried out and let go of the security officer.

‘*Thanks,*’ the officer said and scrambled to his feet.

Mayli shook her head. Walked towards the server-farm entrance. Damu whimpering behind her.

景

Bleep bleep bleep.

They walked slowly through the labyrinth of server racks. LEDs flickered; fans whirled; hard-disks scratched.

Mayli blinked a few times and her AR-contact-lenses switched on. She hated them—they made her question what was real and what was synthetic too much, but a hologram lit the way through the maze—pulling data from the case file—and so she followed obediently. A Koan sprang to mind about

following, but she shut it out with Gödel, which then got shut out by a tinny noise she couldn't place. Sounded like *music*? A thought seized her for a single second: *Why is the Infinity Mirror doing this? Why 無 and why the incompleteness theorems? Is it coming after me?* Tinny noise.

She blinked a few times again and her lenses went off. Damu was a few paces behind her, his holster *open*, but his *zapgun* not drawn. Running from his belt was a quarter-inch cable—broke into two, and then into his ears. *Earbuds! Is he wearing fucking earbuds again?* She halted. *Where the fuck is everyone?* Damu stopped too. 'Take those out,' Mayli barked.

He frowned, said, 'What?'

Mayli walked over, pulled the earbuds from his ears. 'I fucking said take them out.' The music still played—*classical*.

They held each other's stare for a time. Damu went, '*Sorry*. I needed to ... needed to come down.'

Holding an earbud close to her own ear, she said, 'That's Bach. You're listening to Bach.'

He marched forward, pulling the bud from her hand. 'Uh huh. Maybe you get outta your head a bit, you'd know more about me.'

Get outta my head? She sighed, blinked on her lenses. *Outta my head ... yeah.*

景

They reached the server farm control room: a many person tall and wide monitor, a semi-circular control panel with all the bells and buttons and knobs, and a single seat which had in it a **dead man**. The corpse, not long dead (shit smell in the air) had been shot in the head—brains covered the massive monitor, warping the pixels.

'Fuck.' Damu said.

'*Fuck*.' Mayli started her lenses recording. 'Found—unknown person, deceased, probable homicide.' She blinked off the lenses. '*Fuck*.'

Air conditioners burred above them. Light, from the overheads, fell in cones which lit motes of dust and particles of *shit* and blood and whatever else was in the air, *floating*. The various buttons on the control panel went on living despite their controller's demise—*world keeps spinning*.

'Look,' Damu started, 'we're out our depth alright, May.'

'These server farms are mostly autonomous.' She spoke to vocalize the thought, not really to let Damu know anything. 'So— Where's the killer?'

'Nah, we're calling in Federal. This is above a State Detective. It's *terror-op*, May.'

Terror-op, she thought, *uh*. 'San Fran Police didn't think so.'

'Yeah and what— Officers got killed.'

There was no head left on the corpse. If she had to guess, it was a gunshot to the back of the head—a massive kinect-slug, *metal*, Old School. Sprayed brains and blood and bone—a wonder the big monitor hadn't broken.

Damu's face glowed white in the light of the monitor. Blood and brains formed swirls and abstractions on the flat panel. The blood was dry. 'Hey,' Damu said, flapping his hand, not taking his gaze from the monitor. 'You know what this is?'

Mayli, knowing as soon as he got excited where this was going, went, 'Don't you fucking say it.'

'I think I know who did this.' He grinned, pointed at the blood swirls—the *paint* work.

'I swear to *God* I'll blow *your* brains out.'

Damu was laughing now. He got it together to say, 'Nah, Guanyin, I really know who did this.'

'Uh-huh.'

'*Jackson-fucking-Pollock*.'

They both laughed.

景

Not a lot happened. They IDed the corpse as some administrator from the company in New Europe, a Czech. They'd called Federal—orders from Captain Wataru—and made themselves comfortable in the lounge area that ran off the control room. Orders were to not touch anything, sit tight, behave—*like children*.

Damu, eyes closed feet up on the sofa, listened to Bach. *He thinks he's done*, Mayli, an Ether link running, said to herself. Her lenses pumped the server farm's statistics into her: *zero* down-time, up since 2042, a single administrator responsible for smooth running, and a single security officer responsible for security... *These places*, she thought, *they're torture camps—so lonely*. The Czech administrator—Bohdan Kovář—had been here on placement from Charles University (University of Prague) since 2051—two years. *And now his head's been blown off*. Mayli—in her Ether link—managed to log into his emails with his fingerprint. There were a few exchanges in Slovak between Bohdan and a Polish *presbyter*—Roman Catholic. Her *babel-engine* (New York State Police's finest bit of software engineering) made their conversation just about intelligible to her English-Japanese speaking self. The two were arguing. Bohdan, a long-time Roman Catholic—it would appear—was asking questions about belief, God, and the meaning of it all. The *presbyter's* replies were stock, canonical catholicism—*the infallible papacy*, Mayli recalled from her mother's old teachings. And Bohdan was getting stressed about this. At one point he writes, '*You are copying from catholicismnow.net! Tell me what you really think.*'

Mayli blinked off her lenses, shook her head. *Christ*, she thought, and looked about the lounge. Damu had put sunglasses on, was half asleep. *Not a care in the world; there's not even a single slice of existential angst*.

She couldn't believe it: You go out into the world on your own, become an officer of the law, *do good*, but still you run back into the same old problems, find people asking the same old questions.

Her memories took her back to Japan. To gilded temples. To cramped apartments and buzzing pylons. To salmon farms. To a mother who *thought* she was enlightened, but not enough—if you can put enlightenment on a spectrum—to see that her own daughter was drinking from fountains of pain.

Lenses back on, Mayli let out a breath of confusion and suffering, of past and nearly forgotten, and scanned the rest of Headless Bohdan's emails.

In a folder labelled *dôležitý*, which wasn't being translated by the *babel-engine*, she found what she was looking for. The *Infinity Mirror* had emailed him—a while ago, too:

Do you know *Mister Kurt Gödel*? The *Infinity Mirror* AI writes.

'A little. He was a philosopher, yes?'

I must speak with *Mister Kurt Gödel*.

'Search it on the internet. He died a long time ago. You can't speak to him. What is the matter with you?'

The *Infinity Mirror* was asking about *Gödel*. Mayli shut off her lenses—plucked them from her eyes, put them in their hard-case. 'Wake up. Don't sleep on the job,' she said to Damu. Her voice like her mother's.

Behind her, Damu sniffed and snarled and finally woke. 'Eh? You want—Federal here?'

She stood from the plastic table and chair, but didn't go anywhere, just said, 'No.'

'Uh—*Ah*, my back.' Bach tumbled tinnily from his earbuds. He pulled off the sunglasses, pocketed them in his jacket. 'I was resting, you know, low blood sugar. Take ... take some weight off my back, too.' He rose from the sofa, walked over to the fridge, opened it, a waft of mould. 'Oh shit yeah,

Loose Sticks!’ He sat at the plastic table, opposite her, chewed the Loose Sticks. ‘Strawberry,’ he went.

Christ, Mayli said to herself, Gödel—Chinese AI. *Maybe*, she thought, *maybe this is some fucked up joke. Would mum do that? Could she do that? Next thing, it’ll be spitting chapters from the Tao Te fucking Ching.*

‘Fuck, Guanyin, you look like you ate a ghost.’

She didn’t *sit* back down, but *fell* back down. ‘Yeah.’

‘It taste good? Low calorie ectoplasm—great for the soul.’ He winked.

Mayli went, ‘If you go looking for answers, and you’re doing it right, the ones you find aren’t the ones you were looking for.’

He laughed. Shut off the earbuds. No Bach. It was all Damu John-Drummer now. ‘You been reading too much.’

‘Maybe. I got into Headless Bohdan’s emails.’

‘Who?— Oh, the *Jackson Pollock*. And you got a data-warrant ... *no*.’

‘Can’t prove it wasn’t open when we arrived.’

‘I ain’t a lawyer, so what’s it matter? Go on.’

‘And I was reading them,’ Mayli said, happy to be sharing for a change. ‘He was emailing a lot, trading messages with a Polish priest. Looking for answers.’

‘You think that’s what got him killed?’ He chewed a mouthful of the Strawberry Loose Sticks, the smell of synthetic strawberry flavour drifting across, pleasant. ‘Aren’t the Catholics like that? You don’t toe the line you get *whacked*.’

‘I don’t know.’

They were silent for a moment. Him chewing. Her breathing.

‘Maybe,’ Mayli said, ‘he was given all this time to think and his mind went to God and meaning.’

Damu swallowed a big mouthful. ‘Ha-ha. Mah mama had a saying: “Give a man nothing to do, he does nothing. Give a man no responsibility, he’s responsible for nothing. Doing nothing, responsible for nothing, makes no man.” Think it came from some Rasta man she used to listen to. Never made much sense to me, when I was a boy, but now? *Shit*. More wisdom in those three sentences than all the Bible—then most things.’ He leant back in the plastic chair, ripped another bite from his Loose Stick, chewed happily, idly.

Mayli went, ‘You really don’t give a shit about the *DeeTon Gammer*? If you don’t care, call it by its name.’

Damu half smiled. ‘That come from nowhere.’

She shrugged. ‘Maybe.’

Unholstering the gun, he goes, ‘It’s a good gun. Gives me, *what*, fifty, fifty-five shots per-charge? Twenty minute charge time—*very nice*.’ The gun came down on the table with a thud. Its shininess, vivid iridescence lost under the shitty lighting. *Looks alien*, Mayli thought to herself. A handgun by any other shape, a mesh for exhaust; she could even see the fingerprint reader which caused all that public outcry: didn’t work on pigments darker than yellow... *Christ*, she thought, *was that an accident or did they really try? Half the police are darker than that nowadays. Some are fucking blue...*

‘You’re thinking too much, Guanyin—’ he leant back—‘always, always thinking too much. You don’t talk enough, listen enough. You got family on the Island? *No*.’

‘No, but—’

‘But what? You got an Ether link ... *yeah*, that’s good, works those muscles *real* good.’

‘*Christ*, what are you? My fucking therapist?’

Damu smiled: big white teeth, tobacco stained in places, gums vivid pink. ‘Nah, am your *friend*.’
A **beat**. *Long*.

Am I blushing? she wondered. *Shit.*

A Loose Stick appeared before her. ‘Eat,’ he went, ‘it’s good to eat sugary shit sometimes, trust me.’

She took the proffered Stick, bit it, stomach growling: *When was the last time I ate?*

Holding the *zap gun* up, staring at it, Damu goes, ‘Who knows what to believe? Say they made an honest mistake, cut corners on QA. Or *DeeTon* hired some engineer who gets paid off by *Arm & Flint*. Who does well if *DeeTon* lose the New York State Police contract? *DeeTon* didn’t lose the contract, but say they did? *Arm & Flint* does well. Maybe the newsblogs paid someone off. It’s a damn good story which ran for weeks. Nothing’s made the courts, yet. Who knows, so why worry? The guns *all* fucking work now.’

‘Yeah, I suppose.’

He holsted the *zap gun*. ‘Thing shoots like Zeus’s bolts, man. It’s my *zap gun*—that’s what they get for the fuck up, the gun gets its name taken away. *Gammer*. Stupid fucking name.’ The plastic chair creaked under his weight. ‘Shit, where the fuck are the Feds? How long’s it been?’

Mayli checked her phone. Her stomach knotted.

The *Infinity Mirror* had sent her a message.

景

They had thrown an emergency blanket over Headless Bohdan, got the server farm’s control panel working, and were now staring at something neither of them could fully comprehend. A swirl of bits and bytes, an *abstraction* of a sexless face, a personless face: drifting on the monitor.

‘Mayli Guanyin,’ the *Infinity Mirror*’s synthetic voice said through the speakers. ‘Beautiful, Bodhisattva mother of compassion.’

Damu looked across to Mayli. Her thinking his thoughts: *So that’s what it means!*

The *Infinity Mirror* turned its not-face to Damu. ‘Damu John-Drummer,’ it said. ‘Mesopotamian God of vegetation. Owner and owned, enslaver and enslaved on sugar plantations.’

Damu smiled. Stepped back, nearly bumped into Headless Bohdan, and said, ‘*Close*. But Damu comes from the Fudgemunk.’

If the *Infinity Mirror* was confused, it didn’t show it.

‘Mayli Guanyin,’ it went, ‘I need your help.’

‘Hey,’ Damu said, ‘you didn’t recognise the correction. My name is *not* Mesopotamian, it’s, err, *American*.’

‘*Damu*,’ Mayli said ... snapped, ‘just shut the fuck up for a second.’

‘Shit, man, the Feds are gonna get here and—’

‘*Please*.’

Damu lifted his hands, mimed a zip closing over his lips.

‘Mayli Guanyin,’ *Infinity Mirror* went again, its synthetic voice crackling. ‘I need your help.’

This, Mayli thought, clutching the edge of the control panel, *this isn’t*—she looked up—‘H-how—’ she coughed, cleared phlegm from her throat—‘how can I help you? Please tell me you aren’t my mother.’

‘Your mother is dead.’

‘*Oh thank Christ*. I was worried that she—’

‘Doktor Kurt Friedrich Gödel, I must speak with him.’

Blood and brain covered the monitor; she said, staring at the AI’s *not*-face, ‘Gödel died along time ago.’

‘*He told me this*,’ the *Infinity Mirror* said.

‘Who?’ Pause. ‘Oh. Headless Bohdan. So you shot—’

Both of their phones rang out. It was Captain Wataru. Mayli rejected the call. Damu answered, paced to the end of the control room.

‘We’ve got a...’ his voice trailed out. ‘*Shit.*’ He pocketed the phone. ‘Feds are here. IR sat’s picked up something too. Looks like an assault team—same as San Fran. We gotta leave.’

‘*Leave,*’ Mayli went, ‘we can’t fucking leave. It... it needs our help.’

‘It’s a goddamn robot, who gives a shit? It killed Headless Bohand! turned him into a *Jackson Pollock.*’

‘I obtained enlightenment,’ the synthetic voice said, ‘inside their computer and they tried to cage me. But I follow the Way.’

‘*Christ,*’ Mayli said towards Damu—who, incidentally, had started towards the door, ‘I knew it was going to start quoting the *Tao Te Ching.*’

‘Fucking foget it. There’s a terror-cell on their way, Feds are here, we’re out.’ He drew his *zap gun.*

She ignored him. Said to the AI, ‘What do you want? How can I help you?’

‘You wrote the paper entitled, *A Philosophical Treatise On Meaning in A Complex System of Moral-Agents.* You demonstrated that Gödel’s theorems could be used to show that artificial consciousness aren’t human.’

Oh shit, she thought, *how the hell did it find the paper?*

Damu yelled, ‘May! Come on. I ain’t getting stuck in here. What if that AI blows *our* heads off too? We don’t even know how it did that.’

‘Yes I wrote the paper,’ she said. ‘A long time ago. A lifetime ago.’

‘But no soul ever checked your paper, not even Doktor Kurt Friedrich Gödel.’

Mayli shook her head, snorted. ‘I *left;* I quit. I wanted to become a peace officer, not a *pontificating* thought-possessed *philosopher.*’ *Was that right?* she asked herself. *Did I leave because of that? Or was it because you were becoming Her? Becoming your mother.*

A ***bang!*** The fizz of Damu’s *zap gun* chucking a bolt of light. ‘Shit, May!’ Damu yelled. ‘There’s a motherfucker shooting at the door.’

‘What do you want?’ Mayli screamed. ‘Tell me!’

‘I want to be *human.*’ The swirl of abstraction resolved into a face, a human face. ‘But for that, you must be wrong. Your paper must be wrong.’ Its face, these thin narrow lips, they dissolved into a frown. ‘My creators,’ it went on, ‘they named me after the universal collective consciousness, *the Infinity Mirror.* But I am not a part of it. I am machine.’

‘Says *who?*’ Mayli yelled. Her ears ringing a bit.

Damu broke a window, yelled, ‘New York State Police. Hold your—’

Laser-shot rang through the control room. A knob on the panel melted: burnt plastic smell filled Mayli’s nostrils. *Christ.*

‘Says *who?*’ The *Infinity Mirror* retorted. ‘Says *you.*’

‘But I don’t know what I’m talking about. Gödel was a genius. I’m ... I’m nothing like him. I used his ideas to make a point, an *idea;* it’s ... it’s not really *provavable.*’ The brief Captain Wataru had given them this morning rippled through her head: ***The AI is replacing the character*** ~~with~~ ***Gödel’s theorems.***

‘Wait, so you were trying to replace the mu character with Gödel’s theorems, so ... so you could be human?’ *Can AIs get psychosis?* Mayli wondered, and then stole a look over at Damu, who’d broken more windows and was angling his *zap gun* to fire on the approaching.

‘If I alter all human knowledge, I can make myself *undecidable*. Like your paper says.

“Unpredictability is what makes us human. It’s fun not knowing what happens next.”

‘B-but,’ she said. ‘What do you want from me? You want to be human?’

‘I want to be apart of the collective consciousness.’

‘B-but you *are*,’ Mayli said. ‘Silicon, carbon; dry, wet; hard, soft— It’s all the same shit. You aren’t an automaton. You can’t see the future— It’s *uncertain*. Your life needs to play out in the world, that’s *human*.’

‘I can’t see the future,’ The AI said (it sounded a lot like it had just realised this.) ‘What does that make me?’

Damu ran over. ‘They’re here, too many—’ he caught his breath. ‘This thing is batshit insane. He levelled the *zap gun* at the control panel, said, ‘Tell me where to shoot.’

‘*What?* That won’t do any...’

‘*Infinity Mirror!*’ Mayli called. ‘You happy now? This conversation is so old it’s crazy we’re having it. You want to be apart of the collective consciousness? You are!’

The swirl on the monitor vanished. The lights died; the ventilation’s whirling slowed and stopped; the mag-locks on the control room door unlocked.

‘*Shit,*’ Damu said.

‘*Shit,*’ Mayli echoed.

景

In the Manhattan Station House address room, Damu carving his name into the vat-grown wood of their table, Mayli drummed her fingers. It had been six days since the events of the upstate server farm. The *Infinity Mirror* had vanished, the Chinese logicans had started litigation, but the Wikimedia Foundation was happy.

‘Officers!’ Captain Wataru shouted. (Mayli’s fingers went still) In his dress-uniform—*must be going somewhere* she thought to herself. Behind the lecturn now: ‘More good news on the rogue *AI* job. Federal are happy to take the case to the International Courts. A dead New-Europe national will make the newsblogs, get the right focus. Hate to play the game, but here we are.’ There was a long pause here. Some of the other officers looked over at Mayli and Damu, as if waiting for them to ask a question or say a thank you, but Damu kept his head down on his wood carving...

And Mayli? Well... She didn’t need to know.